

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman **Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23)** cast a vote today for America's families by supporting the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, H.R. 3221.

The bill, which passed the House of Representatives Thursday by a vote of 253 to 171, expands access to an affordable college education to more students, creates more early education opportunities, and builds a world-class community college system. The passage of the SAFRA will help build a stronger, more competitive American economy for the future while saving taxpayers money.

"Higher education is one of the most important pathways to rebuilding our economy," said Congressman Rodriguez. "This bill is a long-term and critical investment in our young people. The changes will help students attend college or receive career training which will make them successful members of our future workforce." The bill, which is part of President Obama's plan to ensure that the United States leads the world in college graduates by 2020, will have a significant impact on the constituents of the 23rd Congressional District.

Recipients of Pell Grant funding in the 23rd

rd

Congressional District will nearly double from 22,671 this year to 40,010 in 2019. The amount of Pell Grant funding will go from \$61 million to more than \$153 million in the same time period. And because the bill will simplify the application process for federal funding, the number of FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) applicants is expected to increase from 45,000 now to 67,000 by 2012.

The Act will reform the federal student loan system, save taxpayers \$87 billion and direct \$10 billion back to the Treasury to reduce entitlement spending. The government's Direct Loan program will provide financial assistance to students while keeping competition in place among private lenders and non-profits.

Pell Grants will increase from \$5,350 today to \$6,900 by 2019 and interest rates on government-subsidized loans will be kept low. In addition, the process of applying for aid will be simplified.

The bill also:

- Provides schools with access to funding for green, energy-efficient modernization projects, creates an Early Learning Challenge Fund
- Creates an Early Learning Challenge Fund to award states that implement standards-based early education reforms
- Supports free, high-quality online training courses
- Strengthens the Perkins Loan program with more reliable forms of credit from the federal government
- Invests \$2.55 billion in historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority-serving

institutions

“This bill is a win for our nation,” Congressman Rodriguez said. “We will see the benefits of this long-term planning for years to come.”

#